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## ABSTRACT

This report examines developments in continuing vocational training (CVT) in the framework of lifelong learning for all with a particular emphasis on quality assurance (QA). It defines CVT, quality, and QA. The state of the debate on QA in CVT is examined in the European Union countries and partner states. The issue of the "European recognition" for the partner states is regarded in terms of the expansion and management of QA mechanisms. The examination of the main trends in policy measures to ensure QA in CVT presents major survey results: actors include the social partners whose role should expand and the main approaches to QA are policies focused either on the institutional process or mixing that approach with elements of the outcome-based one. All QA approaches are characterized and national policy measures to improve QA are examined. The emergence of new approaches to QA are discussed. Challenges for the future are summarized in the following categories: links between occupational and training standards; link between certification of initial VET and certification of CVT; QA for initial VET and CVT, which also involves the need to better define the European aspects of QA; and new roles and responsibilities of the public and private actors. The final section is devoted to the potential role for the European Training Foundation. Appendixes contain the questionnaire, country specific information, and a glossary. Contains 37 references. (YLB)

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European Training Foundation

## Subgroup B

### REPORT

# QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

June 1998

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report examines some recent developments in Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) in the framework of lifelong learning for all with a particular emphasis on quality assurance. It defines such concepts as CVT, quality and quality assurance.

The state of the debate on quality assurance in CVT is examined in the European Union countries and in the partner states. Several aspects are highlighted: norms and standards for the content of training, quality assurance for training institutions, changes in quality assurance due to CVT developments and the recent focus on outcomes. The situation in partner states is presented and underlines a major objective: the need to link occupational standards and training standards. To conclude, the issue of the “European recognition” for the partner states is looked upon in terms of the expansion and the management of quality assurance mechanisms.

The examination of the main trends in policy measures to ensure quality assurance in CVT presents the major results from the survey. First, the actors involved include the social partners whose role should still expand. Second and major result: the main approaches to quality assurance are policies focused either on the institutional process or, mixing that approach with elements of the outcome based one. None of the countries defined themselves as developing purely outcome-based practices and policies. All quality assurance approaches are characterised and national policy measures to improve quality assurance are examined.

The emergence of new approaches to quality assurance are discussed with emphasis on the institutional process and the ISO norms as well as the outcomes-based approach and the EN45013 norm. To draw lessons from policies and practices in recent years, several messages could be emphasised. First the need for each country to develop its own approach as a result of the clear understanding that a simple transfer of models is neither feasible or desirable. Second, the above-mentioned European norms are quality assurance norms which could be used by countries as a reference point or even as a “common tool” for quality assurance while occupational or training standards should remain country specific. Third, these norms answer different questions. Fourth, both of these norms insist on the need for a “third party” to provide the assessment.

This leads to the challenges for the future that can be summarised under four headings:

- 1) The links between occupational standards and training standards;
- 2) The link between certification of initial VET and certification of CVT;
- 3) Quality assurance for initial VET and CVT which also involves the need to better define the European aspects of quality assurance;
- 4) The new roles and responsibilities of the public and private actors

Finally, a section is devoted to the potential role for the European Training Foundation. The provision of policy advice and the technical assistance are emphasised by countries and by the members of Subgroup B. A particular proposal for a follow up is presented which could be included in the new Work Programme (1999-2001).

## NOTE

The objectives of this report on Quality Assurance in Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) are to facilitate the exchange of information between EU member states and partner states and to provide appropriate action-oriented recommendations for the future work of the European Training Foundation (ETF). Information on different policies and initiatives which have developed is presented with a view to achieving improved quality assurance in continuing vocational training.

The outcomes of the report illustrate some approaches on the basis of concrete national or transnational cases. They also encourage partnerships for further exchanges of knowledge on examples of best practice and on pilot testing of new joint initiatives and they provide recommendations on the potential assistance role to be played by the ETF.

The meeting of Sub-Group Chairmen held in December 1997 in Turin proposed the launch of a questionnaire directed to EU member states and partner states (Phare and Tacis). Data was collected from seven EU member states - Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and from the European Employers; from five Phare countries - Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic, and from five Tacis countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Mongolia and Uzbekistan.

The draft report was discussed at the Sub Group B meeting held in Dublin (Ireland), March 25 to 28, 1998. Comments and proposals have been taken into account in the preparation of the revised report which was discussed at the meeting of Advisory Forum Sub-Group Chairmen and Experts (4-5 June, 1998) in Turin. This final report will be presented at the Plenary Meeting of the Advisory Forum to be held next September in Turin.

This report is written by Danielle Colardyn, Ph D, Comp. as. consultant (Paris) and Professor at the College of Europe (Bruges) in her capacity as an expert on certification and quality issues in education and training policies.

This Report was prepared with the financial assistance of the European Training Foundation. The views expressed herein are those of the Contractor and do not represent the official views of the Foundation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) comprises both continuing training for the adult labour force (delivered by enterprises, programmes for the unemployed, professional associations, non profit associations or others), and the pursuit of initial education for adults who lack an adequate foundation. As proposed by the White Paper on “Teaching and Training Towards The Learning Society” (1996) to develop lifelong learning, CVT plays a particularly important role in the retraining of adults in EU member states and in partner states. As stated, education and training, fundamental aspects of employment and competitiveness, have to be constantly reinforced particularly continuing education and training. As mentioned in the Ministerial communiqué at the OECD Ministerial meeting on “Lifelong Learning (LLL) for all” (1996): “Many adults have not been able to adopt an adequate base for lifelong learning. Up to one in three adults in many OECD countries have attained only minimum standards of literacy and numeracy. ... Skills and competences gained outside the formal system are often unrecognised and undervalued... Ministers agreed to give a high priority to the availability of a board range of options after compulsory schooling, especially in upper secondary and the first years of tertiary education, smoothing the transition to working life.... A more fluid relationship between learning and work will be needed in the future, where an initial period of full-time education is followed by various combinations of work (full or part time), training and education provided in enterprises, schools and tertiary institutions”.

## 1.1 Specific Aspects of CVT

With regard to the present and future developments of CVT, quality emerges as an important issue in the European Union as well as in the partner states. Before examining quality assurance, one has to underline the necessity to distinguish clearly between initial vocational training and continuing vocational training, especially as regards the issues of quality and quality assurance. As a result of the CEDEFOP work on Quality Issues and Trends in Vocational Education and Training in Europe (1996) a set of criteria distinguishing initial vocational training and continuing vocational education and training in relation to quality assurance issues has been proposed. CEDEFOP refers to “initial” vocational education and training as the vocational part of the secondary education system, i.e. leading to recognised qualifications at that level. By contrast, “continuing” vocational education and training consists of vocational training programmes and courses for people who are (or could be) at work and /or have some kind of general or vocational qualification. Although part of such training could lead to recognised qualifications, continuing education and training displays many characteristics which make it different from initial vocational training:

- in general, there is a very broad range of providers of varying types, both public and private;
- programmes are mostly measured in terms of days and weeks, rather than years;
- training is often targeted at specific groups such as unemployed people or workers from certain sectors.

In general, it can be stated that public authorities and social partners have different roles in initial and in continuing vocational education and training. The involvement of enterprises and unions can vary widely as CVT is for the large part market oriented. The public authorities in



charge of training and retraining for the unemployed are more oriented towards labour demands than they are in the case of initial vocation education which has to fulfil broad social and educational needs. Enterprises and private training providers (profit and non profit) are closely following market needs with a client oriented approach.

## **1.2 Quality and Quality assurance developments**

As a consequence of the above CVT is characterised by a multiplicity of providers and a large number of training programmes either on-the-job or in other ways to retrain and upgrade the labour force. High quality in CVT is of particular relevance as it will ensure the acquisition and upgrading of the skills needed to allow individuals and enterprises to adapt to the demands of economic transition. Hereafter there is reference to some of the main reasons for the increased attention paid to quality and quality assurance issues. The quality of the offer has to be clarified and mechanisms of quality assurance have to be in place to demonstrate the quality for the customers who can be the individuals as well as the enterprises.

Firstly, the diversified expansion, over the last decade, of providers of continuing education and training and their training provision, is in itself at the origin of the growing call for quality assurance approaches. Implicit in this development is the recognition that market mechanisms, which normally lead to quality improvement and elimination of low quality provision, are not working optimally (CEDEFOP,1996). The second factor which explains the growing concern for quality assurance is the crucial importance of the “outcomes” oriented processes. CVT is more focused on results achieved than on the inputs used to achieve these results as would be the case in initial vocational education. A third factor is the scarcity of information about how such outcomes are achieved. While much of CVT is part of the education and training system of a country, many elements are more diversified and less structured than initial education. In particular, assessment of the outcomes merits additional clarification: what procedures for examination, recognition and certification? The diversity calls for quality assurance mechanisms to ensure it satisfies quality criteria. Therefore, quality assurance mechanisms are essential.

Mechanisms for quality assurance are developing both in initial and continuing vocational education and training. More broadly, quality and quality assurance become central issues in the development and implementation of the lifelong learning perspective.

### **1.3 Quality and Quality assurance concepts**

Quality and quality assurance are two different concepts: they relate to each other but are distinct. To schematise, quality is concerned with “what”; quality assurance is concerned with “how”. In CVT, the “what” is concerned with the training standards, the objectives to be achieved through the training or the competence and the level of performance to be achieved. In CVT, the “how” refers to the procedures by which the curriculum, the assessment and the certification ensure the achievement of the objectives of the training standards. It refers to the assessment and the certification procedures in the case of assessment of competences regardless of training.

Quality is a multi-dimensional and relative concept (CEDEFOP, 1996). The European Training Foundation’s glossary of VET terms (1998) defines quality as referring to either the inputs to training or the outcomes of training or even to the costs of training. Whatever the focus, identifying the quality of training depends on making explicit the criteria by which it is to be judged. In this report, quality refers to the training standards since they establish the criteria against which the training is to be judged. In the assessment of competences or of prior learning when there is no training, quality refers to the description of the competence, its level of performance and the proof to assess it. At present, large aspects of these descriptions are found in the occupational standards which are used to specify what is required of people at work and what can be considered as the explicit criteria against which to judge (ETF Glossary, 1998).

Quality assurance is concerned with “how”. In the European Training Foundation glossary (1998), quality assurance is related to the fitting of the organisation’s input, systems and outputs to their purpose. In this report, quality assurance implies the mechanisms and procedures by which the validity and reliability of the certified skills or competences are ensured. Validity means that the assessment assesses what it aims to assess; reliability means that the assessment produces the same result on different occasions with different assessors responsible for assessment. Validity and reliability requirements will ensure the trust which an individual, an enterprise, an education and / or training institution can have in the certificate (diploma or certification of competence). The development of quality assurance procedures can help to establish the validity and the reliability of the assessments in the CVT context. Quality assurance applies at the end of a training procedure or of a process to assess competences or prior and non-formal learning. It will give the assessment its social and professional values and will contribute to its visibility.

### **1.4 Scope of the report**

The report examines three aspects: first, the state of the debate concerning quality assurance in continuing vocational training in EU member states and in partner states; second, the main current trends in policy measures to ensure quality assurance; and, third, future policies and immediate action-oriented recommendations for the Foundation to encourage quality assurance in CVT and help LLL developments.

The report is based on responses to a questionnaire on Quality Assurance in Continuing Vocational Training. The questionnaire was sent to a number of EU member states and partner states. The questionnaire comprised two sections each one supported by an example of a quality assurance policy developed in a country. One section is centred on quality of the

institutional process of training, and the other is focused on quality of the outcomes. While presented in the questionnaire as separate “approaches” for clarifying and analytical purposes, these approaches are often mixed in countries.

The information provided by the questionnaire is used mainly in the section on actual trends to first examine which quality assurance policies are developed or implemented and also to provide concrete examples. The report captures only some of the richness of the material sent by countries. It is hoped that the report provides enough information to help launch some exchanges and partnerships between countries or institutions. The questionnaire is presented in Annex 1. Some additional information on countries is provided in Annex 2 (country specific information). Annex 3 provides a glossary of some of the main terms used in this report.

## **2. STATE OF THE DEBATE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CVT**

### **2.1 Overview**

Quality assurance concerns are increasingly at the core of education and training in EU member states as well as in partner states. In EU member states, the general trend towards increases in levels of educational attainment (initial, secondary and higher education) (OECD, 1993, 1995a, 1997a), the increasing visibility of illiteracy (OECD, 1995b, 1997b), as well as the growing emphasis on lifelong learning (White Paper, EU, 1996; OECD, 1996a) raise concerns about the quality of education. Moreover, the progressive emergence and development of continuing training markets (OECD, 1995c, OECD, 1996b) intensifies the pressure to develop quality assurance mechanisms, in order to provide information to market actors and ensure the smooth functioning of such markets. In partner states, regardless of their extent these developments are occurring in the midst of profound structural changes in education systems, especially VET systems. In this context, deliberations on outcomes based approaches versus more school-based approaches to quality assurance are at the core of the debate surrounding many present reforms.

Moreover, the lifelong learning perspective is at the centre of a cognitive and learning society. It encompasses the following developments:- i) the skills and competences of the labour force need to be more continuously updated; ii) proper certification has to ensure recognition by enterprises and individuals; iii) there may be a need to review both the teaching and learning processes and the methods for assessing and recognising the skills and competences acquired in such processes.

In the partner states CVT developments are central to the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy and to a comprehensive national human resource development policy (Grootings, P., 1995) as also are the links between CVT and secondary and higher education (OECD/GD, 1996). First steps towards developing a complementary “post-initial” human resource development strategy are being taken in some countries (Poland mentioned a financial participation of enterprises and Mongolia a tax reduction for enterprises participating in training).

Nevertheless, in most of the partner countries, human resource development in enterprises is still at an early stage, far from being integrated into a framework that allows coherent lifelong learning for individuals. Often, initial vocational education appears to be the most urgent issue while for the adult population, the unemployment question is the first priority. More rarely are these issues examined as different aspects of a comprehensive human resource development strategy which will have to deal with lifelong learning as it includes learning at school, after school and also outside school, learning in enterprises or anywhere else and being able to recognise competences acquired in non formal settings for finally placing all HRD in a coherent perspective.

Employers, trade unions and professional associations have shown their interest and concerns in quality assurance. One can see the importance of their role and contribution in many EU member countries. In the partner states, their role is increasing, shaping and finding its place in the debates. When involved in quality assurance processes at the level of the enterprise, these actors will be more and more aware of quality and quality assurance concerns. Where quality assurance mechanisms exist, they can and occasionally do seem to help bring together initial education, training, retraining and non formal learning. The role of the social partners and other actors in that process of quality assurance is examined in this section.

Quality assurance mechanisms seem to be one of the answers to the diversified development of CVT and LLL across the EU and OECD countries. Whatever policies and programmes countries do implement could they follow identical and mutually accepted and recognised quality assurance practices? This approach could bring a common framework - a quality framework - in which various national experiments could be developed and still be mutually recognised as they would be “quality proofed”.

## **2.2 The European Union countries**

After decades of developments and of successive improvements in the education and training systems, a general evolution pattern can be identified. For a long time, education and training policies have focused on young people’s education and training, on improvement of general education, on development of initial vocational education and its relationship to enterprises, and on the pathways to a diversifying higher education. In the meantime, some countries have developed adult education, recurrent education, further education, continuing education and retraining. As unemployment increased, Ministries of Labour and/or Employment became more and more involved in initiating, expanding and improving labour market training programmes as an “active” component of labour force market programmes, a complement to mere income transfer.

One outcome of these developments is the questions they raise on recognition and transparency of qualifications, skills and competences. Since the establishment of the European Community, these problems have been addressed in various ways. CEDEFOP (1998b), distinguishes three distinctive stages: the harmonisation of vocational education and training (1957-1973); the approximation of vocational training levels (1974-1992) and the convergence of vocational training (1992-present). This last one would take place on a voluntary basis, a basis of mutual influence and learning. As noted by CEDEFOP, the actual area covered has been widened from issues on transparency of formal vocational qualification to include also non-formal vocational qualification and skills developed through experience.

Rapid technological and organisational changes have made lifelong learning even more necessary and urgent. Skills and competences have to be updated and human resource development must become a recognised element of economic development and competitiveness for countries and for regions (OECD, 1994; OCDE, 1997c). There are generally clear goals and broad objectives. The issue of how they are to be implemented remains uncertain. The debates focus on various key elements such as: norms and standards for training and for training institutions; the impact of the LLL perspective on developments in training markets; the growth of assessment of skills and competences; and finally, the accreditation procedures which are becoming useful tools for achieving further progress in quality assurance.

Several attempts to improve transparency of skills and competences have been made in various countries inside and outside the EU (CEDEFOP, 1998, a, b; Colardyn, 1996). To follow on the proposal of the White Paper on a European Skills Accreditation System and on a Personal Skill Card, as CEDEFOP pointed out, the questions of information, participation and coherence are crucial to the greater development of the LLL processes (CEDEFOP, 1998a).

### ***Forerunner of the current quality debate: Norms and standards for the content of training***

Many of the continental European countries in which initial vocational education is integrated with the education system have national norms and standards for education and training. This can be characterised as one of the very first concrete steps towards quality and quality assurance. Details of the institutional arrangements differ from one country to another. Social partners are always present somewhere in the design of training standards, curriculum and examinations for vocational education. In Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland, social partners are involved in the design of norms and standards. Regions and national levels play more or less important roles depending on decentralisation or centralisation.

This participation characterised countries with a tradition of initial vocation education integrated into the education system. On the other hand, the United Kingdom and other Anglo-Saxon countries in the OECD area have been and still are in search of national norms. Important steps have been taken during the last 10 years in the United Kingdom with the creation of the National Council for Vocational Qualification (NCVQs) in 1986 and the Educational Reform Act (1988); in the United States with a movement towards voluntary norms (Goals 2000); and in Australia with the National Qualification Framework.

### *A second stage in the debate: Quality assurance mechanisms for training institutions.*

Another step towards quality which has been widely used concerns the quality of the institutional process. This approach has been developed especially in those countries without training norms and standards. The accreditation of institutions in the United States depends heavily upon a network of predominantly voluntary organisations to promote the self-regulation of the education and certification systems. The main accreditation body is the American Council on Education composed of 1500 institutions of higher learning and focuses on post secondary education. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning recognises prior learning assessment gained outside the classroom. Though adherence on the part of institutions to the criteria promulgated by the accreditation bodies is voluntary, the influence of the accreditation institutions is strong. At present, there are debates about what criteria are appropriate for accreditation bodies to use to measure institutional effectiveness. Traditionally, measures have focused on “input” criteria such as adequacy of faculty or facilities. There is now a movement towards requiring institutions to have some method to measure outcomes such as the number of students able to pass nationally recognised certification exams (Wills, J. 1994).

Similar procedures are well developed and deeply anchored in the United Kingdom practices as seen for example with three major awarding bodies: the Royal Society of Arts, the City and Guilds, and BTEC. These bodies have been ensuring quality assurance since long before national standards were launched in the United Kingdom. In continental European countries, with a long tradition of vocational training, quality assurance practices have evolved as part of the institutional development of CVT. For example, in France, elaborate mechanisms including the social partners (employers and employees) and the Chambers provide assurance on institutional quality in the training process, while providing input to ensure the relevance of particular training to labour market needs. In Germany, schools and enterprises have respective responsibilities for training while also participating in a joint process of overseeing the quality of school-based and work-based training. They are responsible for their respective share of the training. Similar mechanisms can be found in Austria involving public authorities, social partners, chambers, and professional associations for implementing training and ensuring quality assurance. Another approach developed in Greece takes the form of a “register of trainers”. Trainers are invited to submit documents listing their merits and a corresponding number of merits points are then computed as a result of the evaluation of their titles. If a trainer merits the minimum requirements for becoming a VET trainer, then this person can be further selected to teach according to the rating achieved and the local and regional needs of a particular expertise.



### ***A third state: Changes in quality assurance due to CVT developments***

Training markets, especially for CVT, are expanding in all countries. As already mentioned, technological and organisational change, internationalisation of the economy and globalisation forces countries and enterprises to place more emphasis on retraining processes in order to update human resources. Once-off initial occupational training is no longer possible. General education has to provide a sound basis; initial vocational training is a first step in working life; and lifelong learning, in a number of forms, is a series of retraining events throughout working life.

It is useful first to consider the quality assurance implications for the main aspects of recent developments in CVT. Quality assurance mechanisms have to take account of these new and widespread aspects of CVT. How to ensure quality assurance of short training sessions which do not lead to a qualification? How to ensure quality assurance of informal training and learning on-the-job? These issues have emerged as CVT developments have become more firmly placed in a lifelong learning perspective, in a long time scale and with a long-term education and strategy approach.

As an example of recent debates and changes in EU member countries, a new appreciation of CVT develops as being primarily in the interest of the individual to advance in his professional career or to adapt to changes in the economy. In the last years there are also public campaigns such as the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) and political statements which support and promote a positive climate towards CVT. At the same time, however, it is stressed that CVT is dependent on personal investment and has also to be seen as an economic factor and not merely as an instrument of education. These developments lead to a steadily growing market of CVT providers and foster a competitive climate in terms of the quality of the outcome. To raise the willingness of the individuals to invest in their CVT for personal and economic reasons and to interest the economic actors, particularly the enterprises, to invest in CVT of their staff is nowadays a prime issue for public authorities and political actors. It is also helpful to provide vocational guidance, tax relief or other promotional measures. The design and provision of adequate CVT courses and training facilities, on the other hand, are seen as important issues to be dealt with by economic actors, professional organisations and private training institutions and not only by public authorities (Austria - questionnaire).

CVT opportunities are unevenly distributed. Most further training takes place in large enterprises. Small and medium size enterprises have specific problems and barriers which limit CVT developments. Contrary to hopes or assumptions that continuing and recurrent education could serve second-chance opportunities for early school leavers, CVT is more likely to serve the most qualified part of the labour force; less qualified workers continue to have less access to CVT.

CVT is also of relatively short duration. Implemented by public authorities or by enterprises, chambers or association, it obviously answers a demand from the labour market. That segment of the training market continuously increases. Usually, no formal recognition is attached to short term training. In some very well organised education and training systems, some short courses can be part of a longer curriculum. Nevertheless, it will not as such give access to a formal recognition such as a diploma.

Quality assurance mechanisms focused on the institutional process have proved to be useful for increasing the transparency of the training. Nevertheless, considering the new characteristics of



CVT, quality assurance mechanisms centred on the institutional process cannot take into account all the above-mentioned developments. One of the most challenging shifts which emerged in the last decade was the focus on the outcomes and the development of adapted quality assurance mechanisms.

### *New elements in the quality assurance debate: The focus on outcomes*

The demand for short training, and training in non-formal settings has contributed to the awareness that learning takes place throughout life, in a variety of settings, and that recognition of skills and competences acquired outside of school is an essential part of implementing LLL. In this context, methods of assessment of competences are viewed in many countries as ways of allowing adults to return to formal education and training without learning again what they already know; or simply to certify competences acquired in the work place or elsewhere. Early assessment of competences took place in the United States following the Second World War in the framework of the GI Bill. Not only did it finance higher education on a larger scale than before, but it permitted a new generation to enter higher education on the basis of radically different entrance requirements. Later in this century and operating on similar basis, the National Vocational Qualifications were introduced in the United Kingdom and the assessment centres in France to upgrade the labour force.

As a starting point, quality assurance based on outcomes can usually be observed in programmes performed by the private enterprises, not supervised or financed by state agencies. Their results are retained in the enterprise and generally, at least in the earlier stages of development, these programmes are characterised by specificity, fragility, variation, short and medium term targets. Therefore, quality assurance mechanisms are rapidly needed in order to help consumers (individuals and enterprises).

These approaches are more centred on outcomes individuals are proven to be able to perform than on recognition of institutions. The principle is to upgrade as much as possible by recognition of the skills and competences that persons can demonstrate. It also emphasises the mobility between jobs, from one job to another or from unemployment to employment (Colardyn, 1994, 1997). This outcome based approach raises several issues with the accreditation role usually played by ministries of education. In most European countries, national ministries of education have accreditation roles and powers. In the United States, there is no national policy for accreditation. In the United Kingdom, awarding bodies recognised by the Department of Education and Employment have the right to certify, to deliver a certification for particular kinds of education and training. Appropriate instruments or norms for quality assurance have been developed at European level to encourage the establishment of accreditation bodies (independent from ministries) which accredit certification associations. The certification has to follow a pre-defined set of quality criteria. These criteria and quality procedure were accepted by 18 countries which endorsed the legal framework.

## **2.3 The partner states**

The challenges posed by economic re-structuring give the development of continuing vocational training a particular urgency. In the course of the last decade, links between enterprises and schools have been greatly weakened. This is true for initial vocational education as well as continuing vocational training. Retraining and upgrading the labour force,

the 15 to 64 year olds, is clearly needed to facilitate the economic transition. This concerns the unemployed in the first instance as well as the population at risk of being unemployed and employees in enterprises. The enterprises are undergoing fundamental restructuring in the form of privatisation and modernisation of technologies and work organisation. To implement these changes, individuals in enterprises require new skills, upgrading or recognition of their existing skills and competences. This raises in turn the quality assurance issues mentioned above.

In fact, many tools already exist which can contribute to the development of quality assurance. The most important tools are national norms and standards for occupations and training. They already exist or are in the process of being designed and implemented. However, in order to be useful for quality assurance, these tools need to be explicitly articulated. The discussion below examines how the linking of occupational norms and training standards with one another might be managed to help quality assurance developments.

On the other hand recent initiatives like the ETF funded activity which aims to implement an audit of Business Schools in a number of Phare and Tacis countries illustrates a growing awareness concerning the need to improve the quality of training institutions.

### ***National norms and standards***

National norms (and their validation) are at the core of training and retraining policies as well as of processes for certification of competences. Two kinds of national norms and standards can be distinguished: the occupational norms and the training standards. These norms and standards are defined with the intention of agreement at a national level. Once defined, they are validated by specific procedures designed to reflect consensus views. National norms and standards do not imply a top-down approach: regional governments, local enterprises and schools need to be fully involved in the relatively long process required for the development of such standards (3 to 5 years).

***The occupational norms***, at minimum, describe “clusters of jobs” (or occupations) in terms of the competences required to be performed at a certain level. The framework of such norms should indicate as well a “mobility area” for each job: alternative jobs in which persons with the required competences could work. A very interesting and unique example of this approach can be found in France with the “(Répertoire Opérationnel des Métiers et des Emplois)” developed by the National Agency for Employment, under the Ministry of Employment. These areas of mobility would provide links between various competences and the several occupations in which they are used and applied. Setting occupational standards is like placing cities on a map of a country. “Area of mobility” between jobs are analogous to the proximity of cities to one another, determined by the roads -- or competences -- that enable individuals to move from one city (or occupation) to another. ***The training standards*** establish the content or the organisational criteria for the development of training. Ideally, these standards are derived from the occupational standards. Major progress has been accomplished in this area mainly through the implementation of EU funded pilot programmes as well as the work developed by the Foundation’s Advisory Forum Sub-Group C on vocational standards (ETF 1996). Linkage of occupational norms to training standards can be performed by those responsible for education and training in Ministries (Education and Labour). This should be an objective to pursue for future improvements of CVT in partner states.

***Occupational standards and training standards have different purposes but should be linked.***

Occupational standards fulfil two main purposes. One is to serve as the basis for a competency-based assessment and certification. The other is to provide relevant information to design the training standards. Preferably, occupational standards can serve for both initial vocational education and continuing vocational training even if training is organised differently for young people and for adults. Training standards serve as a basis to design curriculum for training. Equipped with these two sets of national norms and standards, countries can then organise CVT being careful to satisfy a number of quality criteria (see further) and to establish clear links with initial vocational training, general education and higher education.

***Future development of CVT in partner states***

Based on the trends in industrialised countries, one can distinguish at least three possible CVT challenges in partner states. First, improvement of access to training set up in collaboration with enterprises, within enterprises, through Chambers of Commerce, professional bodies or branches. Training should be based on the demands and needs of enterprises which raises the issue of how to stimulate the demand and how to capture it in a useful way for education and training purposes. Second, improved access to regular training proposed by ministries of education and/or labour with entrance “tests” or assessment of competences to avoid duplicating teaching of what adults already know. Third, the assessment and certification of the competences of individuals to fulfil several needs and in general: to help individuals facing redundancy to find new employment; to become entrepreneurs or to define training prospects; to help the enterprises undergoing substantial organisational changes to better manage their human resources; to help develop mobility for individuals either inside or outside enterprises. Based on a clarification of the links between occupational norms and training standards, the quality assurance debate could be better focused and the above challenges tackled.

**2.4 Conclusion: the “European recognition” as an issue for partner states**

At present, neither “European standards” nor “European occupational standards” exist. Nevertheless, many debates around “European recognition” have developed recently as the White and Green Papers have emphasised the “European passport” or European Accreditation Systems. Moreover, in the vast domain of quality, legally established European norms exist for a decade. These provide “general criteria for certification bodies operating certification of personnel”, known as the EN 45013; 1989. Norms are often seen as an aid for consumer protection while not representing a complete guarantee. The debate is open as to what improvements in quality assurance could be gained through references to that European norm. This will be further examined in Section 4 on future policies.

Today, quality assurance can be of national scope or of international scope, and particularly a European one. Some of the procedures and criteria may look alike; some may be very specific and aimed at European recognition. Most of the quality assurance mechanisms developed up to now by countries (Member states as well as partner states) are of national scope. This does not diminish in any way the relevance of these mechanisms. Nevertheless, more and more

emphasis is given to a European level and in particular to an accreditation system providing a certain European validity to certification (White Paper, EU, 1996; Green Paper, EU 1996).

### **3. MAIN TRENDS IN POLICY MEASURES TO ENSURE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CVT AND LLL**

This Section focuses on the present policies and the measures for developing a quality assurance approach in continuing vocational training. It first examines the actors involved in CVT, quality and quality assurance. Second, the main trends to quality assurance policies are examined. It gives an opportunity to define each quality assurance approach and also to examine which one the countries refer to when classifying themselves. Third, the characteristics of quality assurance are described on the basis of four elements which seem to be important in the level of development reached by countries. Fourth, the measures and programmes implemented by countries within each approach are specified.

#### **3.1 The actors**

First of all, in the vast majority of the countries surveyed the actors involved in the quality and quality assurance processes are the public authorities, the social partners - both employers and employees - and the Chambers. In certain countries such as Austria, Estonia and to a lesser extent, Poland, the Chambers have an important role. The participation of the social partners and Chambers can be seen at different levels of the process (Committee in Ireland, France, Greece; members of the Vocational Training and Employment Institute in Portugal; members of different councils in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovak Republic). The Tacis countries do not yet follow that general pattern: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan refer mainly to the Ministry of Education and scientists or teachers and the rare participation of employers in examinations; Belarus and Mongolia rely mainly on the national and regional level of public authorities; though at times, social partners and/or Chambers participate.

Public authorities are mainly represented by the national ministries of education, of labour and social affairs followed by specific ministries. A number of countries mentioned that regional and/or local public authorities are involved (France, Greece, Italy, Ireland; European employers; Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic, Belarus, Mongolia). In Italy, regional authorities always had a fundamental role in vocational education. The recent law 9196/97 which provides a new framework, ensures that specific Regions will remain the principle institutions involved in the process. In addition, the Ministry of Labour will consult the social partners on the matter.

In some countries, there is a particular role devoted to the Chambers as in Austria. Estonia also places a particular emphasis on the role of the Chambers. The Chambers act as representatives of the social partners and they organise and co-ordinate the work of the Vocational/Professional Councils (ETF, Estonia, November 1997). As the Ministry of Social Affairs has delegated this responsibility to them, the Chambers are effectively in charge of the development of the occupational standards. As regards other actors, enterprises are mentioned separately from the social partners when referring to their contribution in Examination commissions, in School councils, in apprenticeship and in work-based learning. As their role in relation to schools is not yet fully developed, they do not appear often. Professional associations are mentioned by Austria in the case of CVT for "regulated professions" and CVT "with regulated curricula". Austria and France mentioned external evaluations undertaken following ISO norms or national

normalisation procedures (AFNOR in France). In general, no other actors such as profit or non-profit associations are mentioned.

### **3.2 Main approaches to quality assurance policies**

Three major trends can be distinguished. One is centred on the institution – the quality of the institutional process. A second is based on the outcomes - a focus on the actual outcome and the quality of the process for assessing them. A third mixes the two previous approaches.

#### ***Policies focusing on quality of the institutional process.***

This approach to achieving quality assurance is based on improving the training institution and the training delivery. Norms and standards specify curriculum inputs: means for assessing and certifying students; the adequacy of faculty, teachers and tutors; and adequacy of facilities. To review the full institutional process of designing and delivering a training process, a set of criteria is followed which also provides a check on the relevance of a particular training to the training market.

A check list of the criteria referred to is presented here:-

- 1) The curriculum trains for the competences listed in the training standards reflecting those needed for the “targeted job”.
- 2) The teachers, staff and faculty are competent.
- 3) The teachers, staff and faculty work in close relation with employers to define the training and to send students for work periods in enterprises.
- 4) The facilities are checked as suitable for the particular “targeted job”.
- 5) The process of eventual selection of the students is satisfactory.
- 6) The organisation of the examination procedures is satisfactory.
- 7) At the end of the training, the students find jobs in the particular “targeted job”.

The quality assurance of the institutional process can be fully achieved only after the training is actually completed and the students are employed (or unemployed). Part of the quality assurance takes place beforehand but the complete control can only be implemented after the training has run for several years. International norms have been developed and in particular the ISO 9000 series which is used to certify training programmes, providers and departments in enterprises.



### ***Policies focusing on the quality of outcomes.***

In industrialised countries, the last decade marked the development of another approach to quality assurance which is now embodied in the competence-based approach. It focuses on evaluating the outcomes in terms of competences demonstrated by individuals, rather than the training process itself. One can demonstrate a competence independently from where and when it was possibly acquired: the essence of this concept is to demonstrate the competence in order to assess it. This approach separates the demonstration of a competence from the structure of the training programme through which a competence was acquired.

A check list of the criteria referred to is presented here:-

- 1) The person demonstrates his/her capacity to do the job, to achieve a result in a real work situation (or as close as possible).
- 2) The learning takes place independent of age and setting (enterprise, school, social or cultural life).
- 3) The assessments are done by a third party and cannot be linked to the teaching setting.
- 4) A certification body which represents all the interested parties with no interest prevailing, is in charge of managing and controlling the assessment system.
- 5) The assessors and verifiers are trained and certified.
- 6) Occupational standards against which competences are demonstrated, are defined in terms of competences.

European quality assurance norms have been developed and in particular some have been applied to the assessment of services and individuals (EN 45013: 1989). The use of this European Norm in improving quality assurance will be discussed.

### ***Policies mixing the two approaches.***

When approaches are mixed, countries can refer to the quality of the institutional process for certain parts of their education and training systems, for example, initial vocational education, apprenticeship; and use of outcome-based approaches for other parts which either relate to vocational training in general or to CVT more specifically.

The mixed approach is characterised as the approach based on the institutional process (see the seven criteria above) to which the set of criteria pertaining to the quality of outcomes (see the six criteria above) is progressively added. Complete quality assurance of outcomes can only be undertaken after the assessment of outcomes are effective for six months or a year. When outcomes of a training or outcomes of acquired competences are at the core of the assessment, quality assurance can only be checked when the training is over, or when the competences have actually been assessed. If not, quality assurance does not rely on any basis. Therefore, quality assurance has to take place when the full system runs and not only before or when training takes place. Then, an accreditation can be given to the certification body to attest to the quality of the complete procedure. In the case of the mixed approach, some of the criteria mentioned will be followed or used by those countries referring to it but not automatically by all of them.

### *The quality assurance approaches followed by countries.*

Of the countries responding to the survey, most classify themselves as following the approach focused on the institutional process, or a mixed approach - institutional and outcome-based. None of the countries mentioned quality assurance following only the outcome-based approach. Table 1 summarises the quality assurance policy for CVT by countries in the EU member states and in the Phare and Tacis countries. Countries are classified according to their answer to Question 1 of the questionnaire.

*Table 1: Quality Assurance Policies by Countries*

COUNTRIES	APPROACHES	
	Mixed (institutional and outcome based)	Institution based
<b>EU MEMBERS</b>		
Austria		X1
Belgium		X
France		X1
Greece		X1
Ireland	X	
Italy		X1
Portugal		X
European Employers	X	
<b>PHARE</b>		
Bulgaria		X
Estonia	X	
Hungary	X	
Poland	X	
Slovak Republic	X	
<b>TACIS</b>		
Armenia		X2
Azerbaijan		X
Belarus		X
Mongolia		X2
Uzbekistan		X2

*Source: Questionnaire ETF, 1998*

X1: aspects of a "mixed approach" at present in development or to be developed in the near future;  
X2: institutional process being established or reinforced.

### **3.3 Characteristics of quality assurance approaches**

In the discussion below, each approach is characterised by the stage of development of four aspects. These four aspects are indicators of the mechanisms set in place to ensure quality assurance. They are more general than the criteria listed previously. Each aspect encompasses



several criteria. They are fundamental to both approaches to quality assurance. Moreover, they are crucial for continuing vocational training growth at the same time as they are indicators of its development. It appears that these four elements contribute to differentiate between groups of countries as far as their CVT development and quality assurance are concerned. The four aspects are:

- 1) The development of national occupational standards and training standards. Their design defines what has to be achieved by education and training and, in this particular case, by CVT in order to take into account labour market changes;
- 2) The assessment of competences in the workplace indicates the relative weight of work-based training especially in CVT or, of any kind of assessment regardless of training;
- 3) The training of CVT trainers and assessors is one of the major elements to ensure quality assurance. Training and certification of trainers and assessors have to be separated and organised in a harmonised fashion;
- 4) The importance enterprises give to human resource development indicates the employers' explicit willingness to take more responsibilities for CVT and more generally, the commitment of the enterprises to develop human resource policies and practices.

The details country by country are to be found in Annex 2. As a result of this survey, these four elements could help to indicate levels of development in countries and help define the directions to look for and the steps to implement. This possible contribution will be further examined in the sections on recommendations (Sections 5 and 6).

### **3.4 National policy measures to ensure quality assurance**

***The mixed approach: Policies mixing quality of the institutional process and quality of outcomes.***

The countries identifying themselves with this approach are Ireland, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic. The European Employers also do so. (For country presentation, see Annex 2).

- ◆ **Development of national occupational standards in addition to training standards**

A total quality approach which focuses on inputs, processes and outcomes is more or less widely developed. Standards exist or are in the process of being developed. Most of the countries have training standards and occupational standards at least for a number of occupations. Linkages between these standards are not yet fully established because the relations between VET & CVT are not always transparent and coherent. Nevertheless, social partners are involved in both. Laws and institutional mechanisms have largely been set up to provide opportunities for linkages between occupational standards and training standards and for future quality assurance to be developed.

- ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace**

In the most advanced situations, prior learning and work-based training are certified: emphasis is given to assessing the skills or the competences, regardless of how or where they are acquired. In other cases, this process is at an early stage of development: either assessment is not yet developed or it relies on traditional forms of examination.

- ◆ **Training of assessors or trainers**

In most countries teacher training is provided by higher education institutions for teachers in general education or VET. When CVT is found in enterprises, the instructors, tutors and assessors are given special training, assessment and certification.

- ◆ **Importance the enterprises give to human resource development**

Though enterprises express some concerns for human resource development and training, it is rarely part of an explicit employer's strategy, especially in SMEs. But, there are signs of more deliberate strategies such as development of mechanisms for financing the cost of training of employees.

### ***Policies focused on the quality of the institutional process***

The countries describing themselves as following this approach are Belgium, Portugal and Bulgaria. While Austria, France, Greece and Italy refer to potential or actual moves toward some characteristics of a mixed model, their present situation is still strongly focused on quality assurance of the institutional process. (For country presentation, see Annex 2).

- ◆ **Development of national occupational standards in addition to training standards**

Training standards are usually firmly established. They exist along with curricula for achieving those standards, and certification for ensuring trainees meet these standards. Social partners are usually involved in setting the national training standards as well as occupational standards. They play a central role. Quality assurance is ensured often by public authorities with social partner involvement.

- ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace**

Work-based training periods exist but assessment does not often take place in the work place. It remains part of the final examination. In many cases the links between enterprises and training authorities are weak.

- ◆ **Training of assessors or trainers**

Training remains the responsibility of the education authorities; professional experience can be taken into consideration.

- ◆ **Importance the enterprises give to human resource development**

In France, human resource development strategy within enterprises is mentioned: to train and retrain workers; to develop mobility of the employees and to help in designing their career. Greece mentioned certain enterprises that have linked a bonus system with outcome based performance after training. At the SME level, not enough has been done to comply with the potential quality norms in CVT. In larger enterprises, the meaning of quality assurance has been better realised. Results are quite encouraging while remaining case specific.

### *The case of the Tacis countries*

Answers to the questionnaire were provided by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Mongolia and Uzbekistan. According to the responses from these four countries, CVT is at the very early stages of development, often not yet formulated as a separate entity. Often, CVT continues to be seen as identical to initial vocational education and training. Moreover, the links between schools and enterprises, between education and employment are not yet re-established. Thus, these Tacis countries are showing the first steps toward an approach to quality of the institutional process though several aspects still need to be worked out to address the problems arising from the political and economic transition process. The management of quality assurance should be developed.

- ◆ **Development of national occupational standards in addition to training standards**

National training standards and occupational standards are being developed. In general, the design process has just started.

- ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace**

One can see the first signs of movement in co-operation between public authorities and social partners to develop new systems.

◆ **Training of assessors or trainers**

Higher education and vocational schools are responsible, as they traditionally were. Sometimes, shortage of specialists is mentioned.

◆ **Importance the enterprises give to human resource development**

Human resource development is not yet a priority for enterprises as physical investments are described as the top priority. Tax reduction mechanisms for enterprises participating in training are mentioned.

## **4. EMERGENCE OF NEW APPROACHES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CVT**

Quality of assessment and quality assurance of the certification procedures are major factors in human resources development (HRD) and mobility of the labour force. The issue of quality assurance in assessment of skills and competences emerges in the context of a more general effort by enterprises to develop total quality approaches. Some examples can be mentioned: the ISO Norms; Investing in People in the United Kingdom; Quality Awards and Benchmarking Clubs in the United Kingdom and the United States.

What lessons are to be drawn from the recent experiences? These quality practices refer to any kind of enterprise. However more and more one sees training institutions or even universities undergoing identical accreditation processes, so as to be identified as following the ISO norms.

### **4.1 Quality assurance: The institutional process and the ISO norms**

The EN ISO 9000 series of standards was adopted in 1987 by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) and produced world wide as ISO 9000 to 9004 (EC, 1996b). Today, these Standards are being applied increasingly in Europe's manufacturing industry. This series of standards deals with the setting-up of quality assurance systems or quality management systems. Certification of a firm in accordance with the procedural guidelines of standards series EN ISO 9000 affects the continuing training organised by employers. Moreover, there is a series of EN ISO 9000 applying directly to continuing vocational training services.

The ISO standards define the organisation of quality assurance in a global perspective, not being concerned or specified to particular products or services. Taking the customer's requirements as the starting point, the ISO standards describe methods of structural and procedural organisation for ensuring quality. The principle of the ISO certification is that quality assurance procedures are based on spot checks or quality inspections. The ISO Standard 9000 provides a uniform method of quality inspection not dependent on any particular enterprise or product and covering the complete organisation of quality assurance. It is important to note that the certification is done by independent third parties.

Training providers and in-enterprise training departments can also be certified directly themselves. The ISO Standards will then have a special role for ensuring quality of training providers and training departments. In fact, quality management in the services sectors, including continuing training, is described in a separate standard (EN ISO 9004-2). It is crucial to note that with these Standards, it is the management of the training facility's quality assurance that is certified, not the individual training measure. The certification relates to the entire enterprise or the parts of it with which the training facility deals, not the individual products or types of products. The certification applies to the process of providing a service by a training institution. Its successful granting means that the training institution is capable of complying with self-imposed quality criteria derived from clients' requirements. A sophisticated example of training design and delivery with reference to the ISO can be found in Ireland (FAS, 1989, 1991).

This EN Standards ISO 9000 approach ensures quality assurance for a complete organisation, structure or process: an enterprise, a training institution, and a training programme. In that sense, it can be seen as the most elaborate procedure relating to quality assurance of the institutional process. The dimensions to be checked for quality assurance of the institutional process given in Annex 4 are extracted from national examples. Other national examples can be found in which more or less identical items would be examined. In none of the countries where quality assurance is defined on the national level does it reach an international recognition. The reference to the EN ISO permits the international reference: it goes beyond the borders of a country.

Any international norm such as the EN ISO Standards Series or the EN 45013 which will be examined below, can be understood as an additional step in quality assurance. First, national mechanisms are or have been established; second, they are perfected to become compatible with the international norms and standards. These two steps preserve national identity as quality assurance is defined by the country's authorities and social partners. It permits international compatibility as the procedure is identical for all users of it. With its own defined norms of quality, a country can apply international norms of quality assurance and reach international compatibility and transparency.

## **4.2 Quality assurance: The outcomes and the EN 45013**

As mentioned, the ISO procedure has no particular significance for the recognition of the individual's skills and competences, for example to certify competences of the personnel in an enterprise labelled as ISO. The same applies for training institutions or universities. As far as individuals are concerned, the label ISO tells them they are in an organisation following ISO norms but it is without implication for their own individual certificates or diplomas. ISO norms assure quality of a whole organisation regardless of who works or studies in it.

The EN 45013 permits the certification of the competences of individuals. This Standard can be of a particular use for recognition of informal training, for recognition of non formal prior learning and for recognition of experience. The EN 45013 applies when competences are assessed regardless of any kind of training provision, a domain which will be growing as CVT develops. The area of assessment of competences is particularly interested in what that Standard can contribute.

In 1989, a European norm was established to give “general criteria for certification bodies operating certification of personnel”. Known as the EN 45013: 1989, this European Norm deals with certification of individuals and allows the accreditation of certification bodies responsible for the assessment of competences and the delivery of certificates of competence to individuals. The Joint European Standards Institution endorsed that norm. The members of the Institution are the national organisations set in place by national authorities and in charge of accreditation in 18 European countries<sup>1</sup>. The norms were designed and signed by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association. They act as a reciprocal trust tool, a mutual recognition of accreditation bodies in line with international norms such as the ISO series. At present, most of the EU member states have an accreditation body internationally recognised as being a member of the Joint European Standards Institution. In each country, the accreditation body looks after the application of the European Norms attached to a particular area (agriculture, food, environment, laboratories, measures, services and personnel). The role of that accreditation body is to accredit the certification bodies in charge of certifying products, services or personnel, depending on which European norm it follows. The EN 45013: 1989 is a voluntary norm.

To deliver a certificate of competence to a person, the norm EN 45013 indicates the rules and procedures a certification body has to follow to ensure the quality of the certification process. One of the rules is that the body should be comprised of all interested parties with none of them being predominant; another is to respect the principle of an assessment done by a third party to avoid being “judge and party”. The accreditation given by an accreditation body means the procedure for assessment of competence was properly implemented under the authority of a certification association. This norm is not yet widely used, but seems to be a useful tool for achieving further progress in quality assurance of certification of competences. It also could be a way to advance towards a European Accreditation System, a possible way forward to integrate European standards envisaged by the Phare and Tacis countries. If such a concept as European Standards does not exist in education, training and CVT, then EN 45013, by providing a common quality assurance system could prove to be helpful in defining some common elements while keeping education and vocational traditions intact within each country.

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<sup>1</sup> Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United-Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Today, the development of a mixed approach in a lifelong learning perspective becomes a priority area. First, the developments in continuing vocational training have to be directly placed in the framework of a LLL approach. Initial and continuing training conceived and designed separately, no longer act separately; post-initial training can no longer be viewed as remedial or second chance opportunities. Training, upgrading and assessment of competences urgently need to be reinforced in order to reach not only the unemployed but also the labour force in the enterprises which are in the midst of changes and evolution. Second, quality assurance also has to be outcome-based, linked with national occupational standards to provide transparency and coherence for individuals, enterprises and educational institutions. The issue of linkages with the training standards has to be discussed further. A transparent and coherent national framework of occupational standards would aim, as a major objective, to improve mobility of individuals in enterprises; between enterprises and from unemployment to employment.

Several aspects of quality improvement have been examined in the survey and in the report. They have been discussed during the meeting of national representatives held in March 1998 in Dublin. To develop and to improve a mixed approach within a lifelong learning perspective, further attention should be given to several issues:

- 1) The links between occupational standards and training standards;
- 2) The links between certification of initial VET and certification of CVT;
- 3) Quality assurance for initial VET and CVT and the European aspects of quality assurance;
- 4) The new roles and responsibilities of public and private actors.

### *1) The links between occupational standards and training standards*

The questions of the linkages between national occupational standards and national training standards are largely unresolved. More attention should be given to the relations between these two sets of standards: should they merge into one system and which way? Should they remain as two separate systems; fulfilling which objectives? As quality assurance needs to refer to one particular set of standards, these questions urgently need to be answered before quality assurance mechanisms take place.



## **2) *The links between certification of initial VET and certification of CVT***

In line with the issue of links between the two sets of standards is the question of the relations between the certification of CVT and the traditional initial certification at secondary and tertiary levels. This is far from being answered in many countries. One step will be possible when certification procedures are clarified: what certificates for initial vocational training versus what certificates for CVT? Do young people go through the same assessment procedures as “older” persons in the labour force? Are the needs identical? What would be the impact for educational attainments and mobility to recognise competences regardless of training? How should the need for a complete training for young people be distinguished from the needs of the adult labour force for very specific upgrading or recognition of competences ?

## **3) *Quality assurance for initial VET and CVT and the European aspects of quality assurance***

Is quality assurance for initial VET identical to quality assurance for CVT? The development of a mixed approach would lead one to believe that quality assurance procedures could be very distinct for the training processes and for the assessment of competences regardless of training. If the mixed model becomes more widespread in the coming years, it could clarify the distinction between training for young persons and adults and between the quality assurance of the institutional process versus quality assurance based on outcomes.

The major requirement to ensure improvement in quality assurance is that the delivery of training and the assessment of the qualification or of the competence have to be separated: assessment has to be the responsibility of a third party. On further step would be to examine how to capitalise on the existing European Norms on quality assurance mechanisms. Further analysis could help to draw lessons on how:-

- \* To improve national approaches to quality assurance;
- \* To use European quality assurance mechanisms as a “common tool” and keep the occupational standards and training standards specific to each country.

In the first case, the improvement of quality assurance could take the form of national awarding bodies such as in the United Kingdom, or the National Commission as in France: they provide quality mechanisms inside the country. The limitation is that these quality assurance mechanisms do not extend outside the country. In the second case, the use of European quality assurance norms might be achieved through creating national accreditation bodies recognising and checking the application of the norms. On validation and certification of individuals (EN 45013), the certification bodies would be accredited if satisfying the European quality assurance norms. These questions do not only concern partner countries but also apply to those EU member states which do not make extensive use of the norms. They could be of use in a number of partner countries provided they recognise and accept the European Norms – EN ISO 9000 Series and the EN 45013: 1989.

## **4) *The new roles and responsibilities of public and private sectors***

In any case, quality assurance implies new responsibilities; many public and private actors already intervene in HRD. They should continue to do so. Therefore, redefining

the roles of the Ministry of Education and of the Ministry of Labour in sharing responsibilities is already taking place. More common work and shared responsibilities emerge as well as complementary roles being devolved to the social partners, Chambers or other actors. Possible limits to the roles of public national authorities in quality assurance have to be discussed further. Indeed, implementing quality assurance involves other actors as well: the State at national, federal and/or Regional levels; multiple ministries or departments; the social partners and professional associations; teachers, “buyers and consumers”. The assessment, being the responsibility of a third party (involving the separation of training delivery from the assessment of results), would clarify the certification procedure. The accreditation or the “labelling” of the diplomas or certificates would not be the responsibility only of ministries of education. These ministries are part of the process but would no longer be the main or the only player.

Some particular aspects of the role of the public authorities were underlined during the debate in Dublin. These included the need to create a positive climate for CVT, to ensure access and quality, to promote and encourage but not necessarily to deliver. For the social partners, it was noted that they have a role in identifying needs, establishing standards and developing material, supporting the institutions and promoting training with the employees. Some particular problems of the partner states were also stressed as for example, the disruption of old relationships; existing systems are outdated and irrelevant; weaknesses of the employer and union bodies; weakness of the infrastructures; problems with national standards and training materials; poor linkages between initial VET and CVT; difficulties of certification and progression; teacher skills and teacher training being out of date; quality systems for initial VET should also be used for CVT to develop unified VET norms.

## 6. POTENTIAL ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION

As the survey and the debates pointed out, the quality assurance area requires more clarification and examination of several issues. In particular, several comments made during the debate in Dublin are worth mentioning. They concern the differences between countries: within member states as within partner states. Underlining the importance to respect these differences means recognising there is no perfect model to be transferred from one country to another: there is no ideal and each country has to define its own approach. Remarks made in Dublin also suggested regionalised approaches and the development of networking of activities: groups of countries would work in teams and conduct “pilot exercises” based on their stage of development; east-east and east-west networking could be promoted; resources could be shared between partner states and examples of good practice in quality assurance could be shown to ensure that choices would be better made.

In relation to quality assurance, two principal areas for a potential role for the European Training Foundation did emerge:-

- 1) The provision of policy advice
- 2) Technical assistance

### *1) The provision of policy advice*

Targeted to policy makers one of the primary goals for the ETF must be to raise the awareness of the necessity for CVT in the framework of lifelong learning for all. This requires raising the awareness of policy makers on the importance of CVT for individuals, enterprises and training institutions. The importance of quality in CVT is essential. To help in achieving this, the development of demand driven CVT as opposed to the implementation of a supply driven approach should also be underlined at the policy level. Moreover, the importance for training institutions to be accredited has to be understood at the highest levels as well as the need for a regular re-assessment procedure.

Many countries suggest that the Foundation pursues its role as a forum to debate what the European approaches to vocational training could mean: what are European levels, occupational profiles, quality standards and quality assurance approaches; what is and what can be a quality assurance policy in education and training? What should be common across countries and what should remain unique to individual countries? How to build common grounds while keeping national specificities in the vocational training area? How to link quality and quality assurance policies with cultural environments? The ETF could also contribute to the transfer of the experiences of European countries and partner states and contribute with other international organisations such CEDEFOP and OECD to develop collaboration.

The Foundation could help ensure that quality assurance procedures would be in line with the guiding principles of CVT as being responsive to the needs of the economy and of the clients. Also, the Foundation's role could be to support the development of help and guidance mechanisms for those countries setting up quality assurance drawing on the existing European Norms (EN- ISO 9000 Series and EN 45013: 1989). The European Committee for Standardisation could help for example by providing guidance to those countries willing to create accreditation and certification bodies.

Finally, in relation to the future Work Programme (1999-2001) and especially objective 2 (to support the development of continuing VET systems within the framework of lifelong learning for all), a particular proposal emerged during the Dublin meeting. It consists of organising a study visit to a number of European Union member countries for a team of representative experts from the Phare and Tacis countries. The team would examine the main developments in CVT with a particular interest in several dimensions including quality assurance mechanisms. The Foundation would assist in the definition of the objectives and the expected outcomes as well as in the implementation and monitoring of the visits. The final report of the experts would serve as a basis for a synthesis report to be presented to the Advisory Forum in the course of the next Work Programme.

## **2) *Technical assistance.***

The technical assistance is more targeted to the implementation of policies by national experts. It involves a bottom up approach. All the countries mention technical assistance. It can take various aspects:-

- \* To establish methods for identifying and assessing the training needs of the economy;
- \* To establish partnerships of CVT providers and counsellors within the countries and between them;
- \* To support projects and monitor developments
- \* To help create institutions;
- \* To assist the development of new technology application in CVT and quality assurance;
- \* To disseminate information and good practice;
- \* To disseminate knowledge about standards and quality;
- \* To share typologies and methodologies;
- \* To establish practitioner-to-practitioner links, east-east and east-west; to organise study visits by experts;
- \* To organise debates on the main principles and models in quality assurance;
- \* To help focus on a total quality approach to process and outcomes.

The EFT in co-operation with CEDEFOP could serve as a clearing house for the exchange of knowledge and expertise to help national authorities and social partners to link occupational standards and training standards. The concepts of quality and quality assurance could help bring together the previously fragmented policies of initial, continuing, formal, non-formal and informal training and learning experiences.

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# ANNEX 1 - QUESTIONNAIRE

## 1. Objectives of the questionnaire

The attached questionnaire is to collect information for the report *Quality Assurance in Continuing Vocational Training* which is to be prepared for the Plenary Meeting, September 7 to 9, 1998. The objectives of the report are:-

- 1) To facilitate exchange of experience and know-how concerning quality assurance in Continuing Vocational Training(CVT) between European Union member states and partner states, and
- 2) To provide action-oriented recommendations for improving quality assurance in Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) in partner states.

Continuing Vocational Training comprises both the existing training for the adult labour force (by enterprises, unemployment programmes, professional associations, non profit associations or others), and the pursuit of initial education for adults who lack an adequate skill foundation. In the framework of developing lifelong learning, CVT plays a particularly important role in the retraining of adults in partner states.

In the partner states, the reasons why quality in CVT is important are twofold. Firstly, because of the economic transition, changes in enterprises and work organisation depend crucially on the acquisition and upgrading of skills, which depend, in turn, on high quality CVT. Secondly, while CVT is part of the education and training system of a country, many elements are more diversified and less structured than initial education. Therefore, quality assurance mechanisms are essential.

## 2. Examples and Questionnaire

It is proposed to distinguish between policies of quality assurance focused on the institutional process of the provision of CVT and those focused on the outcomes of CVT. One example of each “model” or approach is outlined (pages 3 and 4) followed by the questionnaire (pages 5 to 10).

### *Part I – Example of Each “Model”*

#### ♦ Policies focused on the quality of the institutional process.

One approach for achieving quality is based on improving the training institution and training delivery. One means of doing this is to clarify norms and standards as well as the processes of teaching, assessment and certification. Traditionally, the adequacy of faculty, teachers, tutors and/or facilities are taken into consideration. (Section 3.1).



♦ **Policies focused on the quality of the outcomes.**

Another approach to quality assurance is embodied in the competence-based approach. It focuses on evaluating the outcomes rather than the training process itself. One can demonstrate a competence independently from where and when it was acquired: the essence of this concept is to demonstrate the competence in order to assess it. This approach separates the demonstration of a competence from the structure of the training programme through which a competence was acquired. (Section 3.2).

***Part II – Questionnaire***

A short list of questions follows to help you to describe a policy, or a special case or an example you want to be considered for the final report. The questionnaire is presented in Section 4.

**3. Part I -- examples**

***3.1 Policies focused on the quality of the institutional process***

The example of policies focused on the quality of the institutional process is drawn from the French context. The quality control mechanism was implemented by the Prime Minister in 1971 at the same time as the Law on Initial and Continuing Education and Training. As the Law was enforced, the Board for the Accreditation of Degrees and Diplomas (Commission d'Homologation des Titres et Diplômes) was set up in the Ministry of Labour in order to ensure comparability of levels of diplomas and to ensure quality in terms of the institutional coherence. Today, the Board oversees the level and quality in the provision of training. It is not giving a training qualification a status equivalent to a diploma, but for young people and adults who want to enrol in training, it indicates what level of training is provided and ensures the coherence and quality of same.

The Board is composed of representatives of the various Ministries, of the social partners, both the employers and the employees and of the Chambers. The Board is consultative and its proposal have to be accepted by the Prime Minister.

The main criteria for evaluating the training are as follows:-

- 1) Does the curriculum train for the competences listed for the “targeted job”?
- 2) Are the teachers, staff and faculty competent?
- 3) Do they work in close relation with employers (to define the training, to send students for working periods in enterprises?)
- 4) Are the facilities suitable to train for the particular “targeted job” (in situ assessment)?
- 5) Is there any selection of the students? Following what criteria? organised which way?
- 6) How are the examinations procedure organised?
- 7) Do the students find jobs and in particular the “targeted job”?

After three years of delivery, a training provider can undertake the process and present the training to receive a recognition of coherence and quality of the institutional process. The

process generally takes 6 to 12 months. It permits the training provider to evaluate the training at a particular training level.

*This example is described here because it reviews the full institutional process of designing and delivering a training process. It is to be considered as one possible form of a quality assurance mechanism.*

### **3.2 Policies focused on quality of outcomes**

The example of policies focused on quality of the outcomes, found in the United Kingdom, concerns quality of outcomes in Vocational Training. The quality control mechanism was implemented in 1986 by the Ministry of Education at the same time as the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQs) was launched to increase the skills and competences of the labour force in the country. To be approved as a National Vocational Qualification, a qualification must conform to a national standards performance and have reliable assessments. The NVQs are defined by employers meeting in Industry Lead Bodies; they establish the standards of competence accredited by the NCVQ; the assessment ensures that performance matches national standards.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are composed of units each of which represent a separate competence. Each competence is described in detail. A performance criteria is attached to each competence. The performance criteria define the standard required. Each element is assessed individually. Certificates are awarded on the basis of credits for each unit of competence.

The results or the outcomes are not related to the method, length or place of learning. In fact, the principle of NVQs is to be accessible to anyone who is able and willing to reach these standards. They are non-discriminatory in terms of gender, age, race and religion. The assessment of the competence does not take account of the place or method of learning, the age of the candidate or the length of preparation.

NVQs are accredited by validation committees. The characteristics are as follows:-

- 1) The outcomes are established based on the actual performance of the candidate and should, as far as possible, be taken in the usual work environment of the person;
- 2) The assessors will use a variety of assessment tools to ensure the reliability of their judgement (observation, proof proposed by the candidate, oral or written examination, performance of a particular pre-defined task);

- 3) The internal assessment is undertaken by a professional. An internal verifier checks the consistency of the internal assessments. An external verification is undertaken by an outside person trained for such a purpose. These various steps have to be fulfilled in order to demonstrate a competence. The candidate is only concerned with the first one. There is no grade: the competence is achieved or it is not.

*This example is to be considered as one possible form of a quality assurance centred on outcomes. It is described here because it reviews the process of designing and delivering assessment of outcomes.*

## **4. Part II -- questionnaire**

### ***Question 1***

In your country do policies and practices to develop quality assurance in continuing vocational training generally focus on:

- quality of the institutional process as referred to in example 1 (page 3)
- quality of the outcomes as referred to in example 2 (page 4)
- a mixed model referring to elements of examples 1 and 2

Please give a brief explanation or examples to illustrate your answer.

### ***Question 2***

What actors are involved in the quality control process, and what are their respective roles and responsibilities: public authorities - which ones; social partners - which one; associations; Chambers of commerce or trade; regional or local authorities? others?

Are new sharing patterns emerging? Describe briefly.

*In case your country can be mainly characterised by policies and practices that ensure quality of the institutional process (as described in example 1), answer the questions 3 to 7, 11, 12 and 13. If not, please go directly to question 8.*

### ***Question 3***

Are there policies and procedure to establish standards, learning objectives, curriculum and assessment practices in Continuing Vocational Training? If so, briefly describe their main characteristics.

### ***Question 4***

What policies and practices exist for training and assessing the teachers, the staff, the tutors? What procedures are followed to ensure they have the necessary competences?

### ***Question 5***

Are training facilities checked? Are work-based training periods used and assessed; by whom? How?

### ***Question 6***

What policies or programmes exist to link Continuing Vocational Training with standards developed in initial vocational training or general education?

### ***Question 7***

What policies or actions have been developed to link CVT programmes with quality norms established by or within enterprises?

*In case your country can be mainly characterised by policies and practices that ensure quality of the outcomes (as described in example 2), answer the following questions.*

### ***Question 8***

Policies focussed on quality of outcomes aim to assess competences independently of where or how they were acquired. In that respect, are there policies or practices in your country to assess competences in the work place? Describe briefly.

### ***Question 9***

Are the assessment of outcomes and of competences part of the employers' strategy to train, upgrade or retrain human resources?

Are there quality assurance mechanisms focussed on outcomes and competences, which aim specifically at SMEs?

### ***Question 10***

What policies and practices exist for training the assessors and verifiers. What procedures are followed to ensure that they have the necessary competences?

### ***General questions:***

### ***Question 11***

What policies or programmes exist to interlink CVT based on outcome assessment, with CVT based on process assessment?

***Question 12***

How can the European Training Foundation encourage new development or accelerate progress in the area of quality assurance in CVT?

***Question 13***

Any additional recommendations?

## ANNEX 2 - COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Each of the two approaches which have been found to characterise practices, experiences and policies in countries is illustrated by country cases. The TACIS countries are presented separately. The order of presentation starts with the mixed model; then the institutional process and finally the particular case of the Tacis countries. For each approach, four aspects are noted: the development of national occupational standards in addition to training standards; the assessment of competences in the work place; the training of the assessors; and, the importance enterprises give to human resource development.

### The mixed approach

#### *Ireland*

##### ◆ **Standards.**

There is a total quality approach focusing on quality of inputs, processes and outcomes. There are policies and procedures to establish standards, learning objectives, curriculum and assessment practices in CVT. Industry/Employment led standards are achieved following surveys of the scope of occupations and standards. FAS (Training and Employment Authority) works closely with industry to develop national standards for a wide range of occupations. Procedures are in place to assess competences in the workplace. The role of workplace assessors is defined.

##### ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

Accreditation of prior learning and certification of work-based training are used. Certification of skills is most important not how or where they are acquired. Training facilities are checked and work-based training periods are used and assessed.

##### ◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

The staff development policies include technical courses for upgrading skills and secondment to leading firms. Instructor training includes special courses developed with the National University of Ireland for the pedagogical area. Participants are assessed and certified.

##### ◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

The assessment of outcomes and competences are part of the employer's strategy to train, upgrade or retrain human resources. Most enterprises come under the heading of SMEs.

## *Estonia*

### ◆ **Standards.**

The Ministry of Social Affairs has delegated the development of the qualification system to the Chambers of Commerce and Trade in co-operation with the relevant public and private actors. The Chambers set up the professional councils in charge of developing the occupational standards. The councils are composed of the social partners and training providers. An Advisory Council (Ministries, social partners, VET foundation) assists the Chambers in setting up the qualification system and the occupational standards. Nevertheless, it is mentioned that state incentives to encourage the involvement of enterprises in training are lacking. In the 13 Phare Pilot schools, modular curricula allows flexible training for young persons as well as adults (employed and unemployed).

### ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

The Vocational Education and Training policy document approved in early 1998 specifies that qualifications will not be evaluated through curricula, but on actual knowledge, skills, attitudes and proficiency acquired by the trainee and shall create the motivation for lifelong learning.

### ◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

For the trainers, new training on methodology, adult training and marketing should start in 1998.

### ◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

More often than not, the enterprises do not have sufficient information about the courses provided in the schools. A recent survey by the National Observatory of 300 leading companies showed that 67 per cent provide training for their employees and only 37 were satisfied with the situation. It has to be noted that 27 per cent considered that in-service training should be provided by the training institutions rather than by the companies.

## *Hungary*

### ◆ **Standards.**

The Law on Vocational Training (1993) established the National Vocational Training Council and implemented the quality assurance mechanisms. In 1994, the National Training Register which includes the accredited vocational qualifications was implemented. The new vocational standards (occupational standards) are established by advisory groups which include different professional actors such as trainers, employers and employees. The National Institute of Vocational Education publishes manuals and guides. The standards are the same for initial training and CVT. For CVT, according to the age and the prior learning experience, the tendency is to adapt and develop competency-based, modular and flexible training programmes related to labour markets needs.

◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

The work-based training periods are widely used and the assessment is done by the Chambers.

◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Most trainers graduated from higher education. The assessment activities in CVT are linked to the Examination Boards and the assessors are contracted from a list but they have no formal training or systematic assessment..

◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

Some of the CVT programmes are tailored by the requirements of the enterprises. There is no general policy concerning this issue. On the other hand, by the Law (1997) the 1.5 percent of vocational training levy includes 0.2 percent of wage costs for upgrading or retraining the employees of the enterprises. This process is at its beginning.

*Poland*

◆ **Standards.**

Evaluation of quality in CVT contains several features of the institutional process (evaluation of teaching conditions; evaluation of their effects on the teaching activity) as well as some of assessing the quality of outcomes. They are contained in the Regulation of Ministers of Education and Labour (1993) which defines the conditions to govern the status of skilled and highly-skilled workers. It established the Examinations Commission. Actually, training standards are presented in the form of teaching programmes prepared by a Commission composed of school teachers, researchers and employers' representatives. After acceptance by the ministers concerned, it is endorsed by the Ministry of Education. Attempts to create qualification standards (occupational standards) are initiated so that the training will lead to the preparation of occupational standards for specific occupations. Links between initial VOTEC and VET are not yet developed but future CVT will be based on the general and vocational elementary and secondary curriculum.

◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

CVT curricula are prepared by trainers in co-operation with employers who have substantial influence. At present, competences are acquired by passing special examinations (Examination Commissions or Commissions of the Chambers of Handicrafts). The assessment of competences in the workplace is not yet fully developed and is in the process of improvement.



♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Teacher training is prepared by the Methodical Centres following standards set up by the Ministry of Education. The system of training for assessors and verifiers is still at the initial stage; the actual practice requires the assessor to have a university degree and at least 5 years of teaching experience.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

Many employers are interested in upgrading and retraining their employees. They often participate in the cost of training courses for their workers. SMEs have difficulties in providing financial support.

*Slovak Republic*

♦ **Standards.**

Educational and professional standards (training and occupation standards) have been developed from job descriptions in selected occupations. These are evaluated with assistance from the employers. The educational institutions are accredited by the Ministry of Education. The standards developed reflect current needs of the enterprises: applicants are selected based on their demonstrated ability to make practical use of the skill acquired and at the end of the study they pass a school examination. CVT is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and overlaps with programmes in various schools. There is a need to develop post-secondary education.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

Changes in CVT will require a high level of participation and the support of the general public and not only of the education community. There are three main partners with clearly defined and balanced responsibilities in CVT: ministries; public regional authorities and social partners.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Teachers are trained in higher education institutions.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

No mention.

*European Employers*

♦ **Standards.**

The usefulness of a European model for the evaluation of continuing training is underlined.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

In some countries, there are programmes for work-based training periods within the enterprises often in accordance with the possibilities and needs of the enterprises. This will spread in some advanced enterprises in agreement with institutional authorities.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Teachers have to be prepared to recognise some priorities (European dimensions; social partners negotiation, impact of training on the social and economic system). A European method has to be developed to verify that trainers and teachers have the necessary competences.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

The assessment of outcomes and competences are surely part of the employer's strategy, but they also need workers with precise competences in a general cultural framework which can only be obtained after having studied, passed examinations and having had a complete training not focused only on outcomes.

## **Quality of the institutional process**

### *Austria*

♦ **Standards.**

CVT can be split into CVT for regulated professions; formalised CVT with regulated curricula and non-formalised CVT in the unregulated sector. The first type is mainly directed towards the self-employed and/or licensed professions. The second type allows the achievement of diplomas or unregulated professional titles to advance into the professional career: courses are similar to basic vocational education and training in schools but, they are designed as evening courses for the employed. The third type is provided by chambers, professional associations, and private institutions and is market-driven. In general, standards and examinations are well defined through professional laws or school organisation laws supervised by professional bodies and public authorities. Non-formalised CVT is market-driven and ISO 9000 is used to ensure quality. CVT is linked with successful completion of either VET or sufficient general education or at least sufficient professional experience in particular for admission requirements. CVT courses frequently identify target groups by indicating necessary prior initial education and training or periods of professional performance.

◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

There are major differences between the three areas of CVT. In CVT for the regulated professions work-based training periods in general are prerequisites for admission; assessment is provided by Chambers, professional bodies and public authorities. In the formalised CVT with regulated curricula, no work-based periods are included but prior professional periods are frequently prerequisites. Assessment is provided by public school inspection authorities. For non-formalised CVT prior professional periods are sometimes prerequisites and assessment is left to training institutions according to market needs and feed-back from the clients. In general, assessment of outcomes is to be found in the regulated professions and takes the form of professional examinations by a board of professionals. It does not take place at the workplace. Assessment of professional competences acquired in the workplace through professional performance is not common.

◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Initial training as a teacher and/or tutor is provided by public authorities; additional pedagogical and professional updating would be provided by the chambers, professional bodies, public authorities, trade unions and training institutions. In the case of CVT for unregulated professions, admission to act as an examiner is restricted to professionals with adequate practice. Training and upgrading of examiners is the responsibility of the chambers (employers) or professional associations.

◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

The assessment of outcomes and of competences is not part of the employers's strategy to train, upgrade or retrain human resources since assessment procedures relate to regulated professions, regulated by specific profession laws. CVT links with quality norms established by or within enterprises by being responsive to the economy and to the client. In CVT for the regulated professions, the Chamber of employers and of workers provides the infrastructure to articulate training needs and to participate in the planning process of the legal instruments; for formalised CVT with regulated curricula, training needs are articulated by branches and are channelled through the Chambers; for the non-formalised CVT, the private sector secures adequate responsiveness to the client needs.

### ***Belgium (Flemish community)***

#### **◆ Standards.**

Educational quality is assessed by reference to particular standards of attainments (training targets or final education objectives). Quality assurance is a matter for the Department of Education. Other providers develop quality assurance in their own ways. For example, an audit of VDAB's vocational training stated that ISO 9000 should serve as a basis for uniform work procedures and constant quality. VDAB has developed an instrument to measure client satisfaction and the quality of the training service. A quality structure was also set up in the organisation.

#### **◆ Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

Certification is used as a tool but the employer will always expect the employee to prove his/her qualification. VDAB delivers certificates whose quality is recognised. Job placement figures are one of the important quality indicators for the VDAB's training.

#### **◆ Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

There are special initiatives to support the quality of the teaching staff through in-service training and teacher training.

#### **◆ Human resources and enterprises.**

Enterprises strategic requirements can give rise to a VDAB certification: as for domestic (ISO 9000) or as a lorry or bus or coach driver and also for transport of dangerous goods.

### ***France***

#### **◆ Standards.**

A total quality approach is based mainly on process analysis and the recognition of working experience is important. Since the end of the 1980s, training processes have been aimed at defined vocational training objectives set up in co-operation with the social partners and the public authorities in the Commission Technique d'Homologation of the Ministry of Employment. These objectives are used to assess the outcomes of the training. The concept of "competences" instead of "qualifications", the increasing development of "alternance", the role taken in university councils by members of the economic sector all lead education policies towards a realistic approach linked to employability and transition.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

There are more and more work-based training periods, especially with the decentralisation process; the increasing use of the concept of “learning organisation”; the use of information technologies and of real work situations. Some enterprises call for ISO quality assurance mechanisms. Professional associations of trainers play an increasing role in developing a quality culture among their members. More and more the universities give an academic recognition to work experience through portfolio and assessment practices.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

For teachers, periodical inspection is the rule. Staff are not frequently assessed; tutors are volunteers and usually not assessed. The trainers are regularly assessed on pedagogical and curriculum competences. Professional associations develop some practices to ensure that the assessors and verifiers have the necessary competence but the initial selection is based on unanimous recognition.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

Assessment of outcomes and competences is more and more part of the employers’s strategy to train and retrain and to develop mobility.

*Italy*

♦ **Standards**

Until the Law 196/97, there were no practices to develop quality assurance in CVT. The law provides a mixed approach. It includes procedures to provide standards for training. Under the Presidency of the Prime Ministry, a committee will work on quality of national standards.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

With the exception of the Apprenticeship contract and the Training and Work contracts, there are no policies and practices concerning assessment of competences in the work place. The new Law includes some policies to assess competences at work and a decree will be adopted in the next few months to prepare the implementation.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Each Region provides a different training system for assessors and verifiers. There is no national policy or practice on their training.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

A national law (236/93 - art 9) assigns national funds for continuous training of SME workers. An amount of 0.30 per cent of private workers’ salaries contributes to the funds.

## *Greece*

### ◆ **Standards.**

In initial VET, standards, learning objectives, curriculum and assessment practices are outlined clearly. In continuing VET, the above are more loosely structured to meet needs and to ensure flexibility. This latter practice resulted in problems in the delivery of quality through VET and led to the restructuring of the administration of CVT with the launch in April 1997 of the National Centre for the Accreditation of Continuing Education Structures, supervised by the Ministry of Labour. There is no clear link between VET and CVT and there is a growing concern regarding the absence of clarified relationship.

### ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

In both initial VET and in CVT, work based training periods are encouraged while not formally required.

### ◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

As explained in the report, a National registry of initial and continuing VET trainers is in progress and will be operational by September 1998.

### ◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

As developed in the report, enterprises have financial incentives. SMEs have still to improve their quality assurance. Results for larger enterprises are encouraging but are still very specific.

## *Portugal*

### ◆ **Standards.**

The Vocational Training and Employment Institute (IEFP) defines which training courses are suitable for adults who lack adequate skills, workers in enterprises in turbulence and the unemployed. The Institute takes part in quality assurance through the Employment Department --determines training needs --; the Training Department --elaborates curricula -- and the Certification Department --elaborates training profiles and certificates. The curricula are common to both initial and continuing training of the labour force. Usually these training courses are long (1000 to 1400 hours) and conclude with a final examination in which the social partners participate. That type of training takes place in the Public Training Centres. Short training courses for upgrading also exist (30 to 80 hours) and control operates only through continuous evaluation. The short training is organised by the Training Centres managed in partnership with the social partners.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

CVT is assured mainly by the Training Centres which are accredited by the Institute for Training Innovation (INOFOR). To be accredited two main elements are taken into consideration and regularly checked: training facilities and equipment. Quality training involves work-based training periods in enterprises.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Teachers, trainers or tutors in vocational training must be pedagogically certified to be registered in the Trainers National Registration. The certification can be achieved by attending pedagogical courses or by professional experience. The Training Centres control the quality of the trainers based on evaluations by the trainees and the enterprises.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

No mention.

***Bulgaria***

♦ **Standards.**

The Ministry of Education is responsible for vocational education and the Ministry of Labour for the Vocational training defined as outside the vocational education. National Employment Services are in charge of the unemployment issues and the National Vocational Training Council approves the national vocational training standards. The Council is comprised of the Ministries of Labour, Science and the social partners. The Industry Based Councils -- tri-partite composition -- elaborate the standards to be submitted to the Council. The design of standards, learning objectives and assessment practices will be launched soon. At present, the checking of the acquired qualification is driven by the demands of employers. One has to note that privatisation has been slow and that the State still remains the largest employer.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

Since 1990, structural adjustments are taking place and the enterprises have not yet established their links with training. At present, some non-governmental organisations and other actors are working in that direction.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

The competence of teachers is based solely on a university diploma.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

No mention

## **The case of the Tacis countries**

### ***Armenia***

- ◆ **Standards.**

Ministries of Education, Science and other technical ones as well as the employers develop a list of specialities. The standards of vocational education implemented at present were designed at the end of the 1980s. With the new Law of Education, new educational standards will be created and will also define quality assessment.

- ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

Since 1990, the socio-economic changes have brought about the loss of training facilities and have interrupted relationships between education and employment.

- ◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Teachers and tutors can have either university education or experience of jobs in enterprises. Every five years, re-training is compulsory and takes place in higher education institutions.

- ◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

No mention

### ***Azerbaijan***

- ◆ **Standards.**

In vocational and continuing education, new educational standards are worked out. Curricula and educational standards of vocational schools serve as a basis for continuing vocational training. As the majority of industrial enterprises are not in operation, it would be difficult to design curricula which would completely comply with the needs and demands of enterprises.

- ◆ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

No mention.

- ◆ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

In-service training institutions implement training for teachers.

- ◆ **Human resources and enterprises.**

No mention



## ***Belarus***

### **◆ Standards.**

The standards for education include the skills to be achieved, curricula, organisation of time and pedagogical process. Programmes of CVT are similar to general education. The graduates of the vocational schools receive state certificates of secondary education.

### **◆ Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

Work-based training periods are assessed by examinations (reports, practical work, projects). Training facilities are checked by Bodies of State Management, trade-unions and medical organisations.

### **◆ Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Training takes place in higher education institutions.

### **◆ Human resource and enterprises.**

No mention.

## ***Mongolia***

### **◆ Standards.**

Skills and qualification descriptions are developed according to the standards list of occupations and the classification of education approved by competent public authorities and designed according to the standards used in the relevant enterprises. Standards are approved by the State Standardisation Board. Employment Services have an important role in delivering CVT courses to the unemployed as an active labour market policy. Training institutions are authorised to conduct training according to the list of occupations approved by the public authority. Standards, programmes and policies for CVT are not yet established. Therefore, CVT follows standards from general and initial vocational education.

### **◆ Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

As a first step, one can mention that interested enterprises participate in designing training plans, curricula and skills specifications.

### **◆ Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

Training for teaching and assessing teachers takes place in vocational schools and higher education institutions. An adequate system for training and retraining and assessing teachers in CVT needs to be developed and introduced.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

At present, participation of employers, workers and Chambers of Commerce in quality assurance of CVT is weak. Government has taken some measures to support participation. For example, particular employers are given a tax reduction when they invest in vocational training.

*Uzbekistan*

♦ **Standards.**

Early in 1998, the State Commission on educational standards was launched. The elaboration of a new list of professions was carried out. The educational standards present a single structure for all stages of education, general and vocational. While standards of professions are described, the general educational blocks are co-ordinated with general education at secondary level. In theory, standards of education should be established by enterprises. In reality, enterprises rarely take part in establishing and assessing quality standards. Educational standards are established according to normative acts of the Ministry of Public Education without the participation of the Ministry of Labour and employers.

♦ **Assessment of competences in the workplace.**

During the transition period, vocational education is experiencing great difficulties: equipment used in vocational schools is out-of-date; there is an absence of relations with enterprises and pupils have no place for work practice.

♦ **Training of teachers and/or assessors.**

There is no special higher education system preparing teachers for vocational schools. Vocational education suffers from a big shortage of competent specialists.

♦ **Human resources and enterprises.**

Actually, the enterprises do not yet give priority to training and improvement of human resources. Renewing technologies and getting investment in order to develop enterprises are the priorities at this stage.

## ANNEX 3 - GLOSSARY OF MAIN TERMS

### ***Accreditation:***

A process by which an accreditation body accredits that a certification body operating certification of personnel follows specified general criteria recognised at a national or European level. The accreditation body offers to the certification body the possibility to be recognised as applying specified requirements. Accreditation bodies exist in 18 European countries and have been undergoing an international audit process following ISO norms. (EN 45013). In the EFT Glossary (1998), accreditation is defined as the formal process by which the status of a qualification within the national VET system is established. In addition, it is noted that an accreditation system may be the system which is used to recognise the skills and competence of individuals or a system whereby education institutions are accredited by an outside agency.

### ***Assessment:***

An action by a third party, demonstrating that adequate confidence is provided that a duly identified product, process or service is in conformity with a specific standard or other normative document. Also referred to as “certification of conformity” (EN 45013). In Education and Training fields, it would be referred to as “assessment”: it demonstrates through examination, products or other proofs that the level of competence of a person is in conformity with the occupational and/or the training standards. In the ETF Glossary (1998), assessment is defined as the process used to gather and interpret evidence of an individual’s learning achievement and competence; and, the action of judging evidence of learning achievements and competences.

### ***Certification body:***

A body that conducts certification of conformity. The certification body shall be impartial and shall have a structure which requires the choosing of members of its governing board from among those involved in the process of certification without any single interest dominating. A structure that safeguards impartiality and enables participation from all parties concerned regarding the content and the functioning of a certification system will be deemed to satisfy this criterion. (EN 45013). In education and training fields, Ministries of Education are established as certification bodies without reference to the specifications of that European Norm.

### ***Certificate:***

In the ETF Glossary (1998), a certificate is a document which formally records the achievements of an individual.

### ***Certificate of competences:***

A document issued under the rules of a certification system indicating that adequate confidence is provided that the named person is competent in performing specific services. (EN 45013).

### ***Certification system:***

A system that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out certification of conformity (EN 45013). In the ETF Glossary (1998), certification is the process used to recognise the achievements and competence of learners.

### ***Diploma:***

A document issued by Ministries of Education, and sometimes Ministries of Labour to indicate that a person has achieved the requirements of a specific education or training programme as specified in the Training standards (or other norms for general education). The diploma usually indicates grades. In the ETF Glossary (1998), it is defined as a formal document indicating successful completion of a programme or course of study.

### ***Quality:***

Expresses the content of the norms and standards. It can be summarised as the “what”. Whatever the focus, identifying the quality of training depends on making explicit the criteria by which it is to be judged. Within education and training, quality may refer to either the inputs to training (facilities, syllabus, equipment, breadth of training) or to the outcomes of training (the competence, skill and knowledge attained by the learner), or even to the costs of training to the learner, the teacher or the employer.

### ***Quality assurance:***

In CVT, it is described as a systematic planning and in-house implementation of continuing training. The overall process ranges from training needs analysis through planning and implementation of training measures to evaluation (EU, 1996b). In the ETF Glossary (1998), it is noted as the establishment and maintenance of documented procedures designed to ensure that design, development and operational activities result in products or services which meet customers’ stated or contracted requirements.

### ***Occupational standards:***

Tends to be used to specify what is required of people at work (ETF Glossary, 1998). More and more, occupational standards are expressed in terms of competences.

### ***Training standards:***

The objectives to be achieved through the training and defining a “targeted job” in terms of competences. Usually expressed with an action verb: “to be able to ...”.



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